

Giants of Science Series: Alexander Graham Bell

by Michael Pollard, 64 pp.,
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Alexander Graham Bell: Father of Modern Communication describes the personal and professional life of Bell.

From a young teacher of the deaf to his development of the telephone, the author portrays Bell as inquisitive and always engaged in some intellectual pursuit. The text describes his early successes as an inventor and teacher as well his frustrations later in life when he failed to duplicate his success.

Although Bell produced a number of other worthwhile inventions, none connected with the general public quite like the telephone did.

This narrative of Bell's life

has been somewhat simplified to emphasize the story of his most significant invention. The telephone is so familiar that it is a great subject for students to explore.

It is a challenge for an author to provide a complete picture of the subject's life within 60 pages, so some intriguing parts of Bell's life, such as his relationship with his father and father-in-law/financial backer are not addressed in substantial detail. Some readers may want to investigate further.

The language is simple and direct, and the narrative helps the reader to see that inventions typically do not take place in isolation. Economic issues, competition among inventors, and the urge to be "first" all motivate inventors. Connecting the personal with the professional helps to create a more accurate picture of the process of invention.

Biographies can be useful for looking at science in a broader context by examining how scientific principles can be applied to technological problems and challenges, and how those technologies have influenced our lives.

A reading such as this would fit well into a science-technology-society instructional framework in middle or secondary school.

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